

VZCZCXRO7158
PP RUEHCN RUEHVC
DE RUEHGH #0485/01 3500202
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 160202Z DEC 09
FM AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8424
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 9088

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 000485

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM, EAP/ANP, CA/VO/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [CH](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: SHANGHAI AIRLINES TO RESUME SAIPAN SERVICE DECEMBER 18

SHANGHAI 00000485 001.2 OF 002

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Not for internet publication; not for dissemination outside USG channels.

1. (SBU) Shanghai Airlines (SAL) representatives met with Shanghai Consulate Officers December 14 to resolve lingering confusion following a November 28 Department of Homeland Security directive permitting visa-free travel to the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) by Chinese nationals. According to the Shanghai Airlines representatives, coinciding with the November 28 directive, SAL unilaterally decided to suspend service for the twice-weekly flights (scheduled for Mondays and Fridays) between Shanghai's Pudong International Airport and Saipan International Airport. Under the new directive, DHS indicated it will parole into the CNMI visitors for business or pleasure who are nationals of the PRC. Parole will be authorized only for entry into the CNMI and will not extend to other areas of the United States for a duration of stay not to exceed 45 days.

2. (SBU) Embassy Beijing had previously notified the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs via diplomatic note of the impending change. However, the Shanghai Entry-Exit Administration of the Public Security Bureau informed SAL prior to November 28 that the Central Government's Ministry of Public Security had not issued any guidance concerning the new visa waiver directive. Consequently, SAL decided to suspend the service pending formal Chinese internal government notifications (namely, for Shanghai Entry-Exit Administration to receive word from the Central Government). The SAL representatives also noted that, in spite of the new directive, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) had since informed SAL that pilots and crew would still require visas. CBP has instituted a transitional period through January 15, 2010 during which PRC-citizen pilots and crew traveling to CNMI without a visa will not incur any fines. SAL expects to resume the twice-weekly flights from Shanghai to Saipan beginning December 18.

3. (SBU) The SAL representatives raised the DHS requirement for airlines to complete a signatory carrier agreement in order to be authorized to bring passengers to CNMI under the new directive. SAL was not prepared for this new requirement when the directive came into effect. However, according to the SAL representatives, the airline is now a signatory to the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program.

4. (SBU) The Shanghai Consular section offered SAL immediate assistance in obtaining crew visas for an estimated 120 staff (pilots, engineers, flight attendants) that are involved with this route. (Note: The CNMI is SAL's first and only passenger flight to a U.S. destination. SAL also operates cargo flights to Los Angeles International Airport. End Note.) The SAL representatives welcomed the offer of assistance and noted that

the staff would apply for their visas upon issuance of new machine-readable passports by the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office.

15. (SBU) SAL and China Southern are the only two airlines to operate flights between mainland China and the CNMI. SAL representatives told us that the passenger load for their twice-weekly flights in the lead-up to the service suspension was a "satisfactory 80 percent." SAL operates Boeing 767s to service the CNMI route, with seating for 263 passengers. According to the SAL representatives, Shanghai-Saipan route service began with chartered flights in early 2008. Due to high demand, beginning on September 4, 2009, SAL changed the route from chartered service to scheduled service.

16. (SBU) Chinese nationals require visas to travel to most international destinations, which may in part explain some of the confusion and trepidation exhibited by Chinese authorities when encountering would be Chinese national tourists departing China for a U.S. destination without valid visas. Prior to the new DHS directive that went into effect November 28, CNMI issued its own, distinct visas to Chinese visitors through two travel agent consolidators Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty. The Shanghai Consular section routinely sees the previous CNMI visas in the passports of visa applicants.

17. (SBU) The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) works with Kentucky-based National Tour Association (NTA) to provide an exclusive "approved list" of tour operators that promote tourism between the U.S. and China. CNTA and NTA maintain separate lists. Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty work exclusively with Chinese tour operators to arrange tours to CNMI. Although both Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty are U.S. tour operators based in Saipan, only Century Tours is on NTA's approved list as of August 11, 2009. Tinian Dynasty operates under a "special designation" by CNTA. Both operators also have

SHANGHAI 00000485 002.2 OF 002

representative offices throughout China and work with Shanghai Airlines and China Southern Airlines to arrange chartered flights from China to Saipan.
CAMP